DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 600 EC 132 883

AUTHOR Ryan, Gary T.
TITLE An Analysis of Motivational Factors of Gifted Learners.
PUB DATE Jan 81
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Education Research Association (Dallas, TX, January, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; *Motivation; *Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The motivation of 61 gifted and 60 nongifted students (grades 4 through 9) was compared. Scores on the Junior Index of Motivation were analyzed using a weighted scale, with Ss' responses sorted by elementary or secondary grade clusters. Results revealed differing motivational factors between gifted and nongifted as well as between elementary and secondary Ss. Positive school attitude, idealism, optimism, and belongingness were found to be motivational factors for elementary gifted Ss, while disagreement existed on six motivational factors for gifted secondary Ss. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED203600

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AN ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF GIFTED LEARNERS

Gary T. Ryan
The University of Texas at Arlington

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gary Ryan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting
of The Southwest Educational Research Association
Dallas, Texas
Janauary, 1981

EC 132 883

PROBLEM

Allport (1955), Combs and Snygg (1959), and Maslow (1954), among others, supply a vast literature documenting the importance of motivation in human behavior. Athey (1976), Carter (1964), Frymier (1970), and Ryan (1978) provide a like body of literature documenting the relationship between motivation and success in school-like activities. Frymier (1979) states that motivation gives both direction and intensity to human behavior. He further asserts that motivation to learn gives direction and intensity to human behavior in educational context, and motivation to learn in school gives direction and intensity to students' behavior in a school situation. Ryan (1980) reports that motivation differs between gifted and non-gifted learners.

Motivation appears to be afactor rarely questioned as a variable affecting learning in a school setting. Motivation research related to the gifted learner has evolved around the relationship between motivation and underachievement. This research by Barrett (1957), and Gowan (1955, 1957, and 1960),

among others deals with interest persay and generalizes to include statements about motivation. Ryan (1980) found that motivation does indeed differ between gifted learners. This significant difference called for further investigation into the factors effecting this variation.

PURPOSE

The present investigation (1) Analyzed the motivation factors manifested by gifted students (i.e., belongingness-alienation, positive attitude-negative school attitude, personal control-fatalism, optimism-pessimism, flexibility-dogmatism, and idealism-pragmatism), (2) Compares the motivational attributes of gifted and non-gifted learners.

INSTRUMENT

The Junior Index of Motivation (JIM Scale) was selected as the standard instrument for measuring and analyzing subjects' level of motivation. The JIM Scale is a standard instrument that places a subject's converted motivation score on a continuum from high to low. The JIM Scale also allows the subject's motivation to be analyzed using a weighted scale. The Scale was developed from a study of hundreds of adolescent's responses to particular items in a

testing situation. The Scale includes 80 items, only 50 of which are scored. Time is not a factor. Correlations of JIM Scale scores with other measures of academic motivation are reported to be high (Frymier, 1970). Further, in both test-retest and split-half analyses, the Scale's reliability is reported to be as high as r=.83 (Frymier, 1970). The Scale of six motivational factors: positive-negative school attitude, belongingness-alienation, idealism-pragmatism, personal control-fatalism, optimism-pessimism, and flexibility-dogmatism.

DATA SOURCE

The study sample included 121 elementary and secondary school students (grades 4-9) randomly selected from public schools in the Dallas- Fort Worth Metroplex. Sixty-one subjects were identified as gifted and 60 as non-gifted. Classification was based on individual I.Q. scores (in excess of 130), ratings from teachers and school counselors, and scores on standard achievement tests.

DATA ANALYSIS

An analysis of responses on the JIM Scale was performed using a weighted scale. Subject responses were sorted by grade clustering, 4-6 (elementary)

and 7-9 (secondary). Gifted and non-gifted subjects' responses were compared. This Data is displayed in Table One.

TABLE ONE

Mean and Standard Deviation by Group

Level	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Non-Gifted (Elementary)	30	109.431	18.602
Gifted (Elementary)	34	134.676	8.147
Non-Gifted (Secondary)	30	97.019	15.632
Gifted (Secondary)	27	70.967	10.182

A T-test comparing the means of Gifted and Non-Gifted (elementary) showed a significant difference between groups ($p < .001$). T-test analysis comparing the means of Gifted and Non-Gifted (secondary) showed a significant difference between samples ($p < .001$). A T-test comparing Gifted (elementary) and Gifted (secondary) showed a significant difference ($p < .001$). T-Test analysis comparing the means of Non-Gifted (elementary) and Non-Gifted (secondary) showed no significant difference between groups.

Additional analysis was accomplished to rank order responses by motivational factors found in the JIM Scale (see Purpose Section). This rank ordering was accomplished by separating responses by weighted factors. Strong agreement was represented by weighted scores of 4.0 to 3.0 (compared to a possible weighted factor of 4). Neutral feelings were factor scores between 2.9 and 2.0. Strong disagreement was assigned to scores between 1.9 and 1.0 (with 1.0 being the lowest possible weighted factor). The results of this analysis are reported in Tables Two and Three. Only the positive dimensions of each motivation factor are listed to aid in the clarity of presentation.

TABLE TWO

Elementary Subjects

Motivation Factor	Gifted	Non-Gifted
Positive School Attitude	Agreement	Neutral
Belongingness	Agreement	Agreement
Idealism	Agreement	Neutral
Personal Control	Disagreement	Neutral
Optimism	Agreement	Agreement
Flexibility	Disagreement	Agreement

TABLE THREE

Secondary Subjects

Motivation Factor	Gifted	Non-Gifted
Positive School Attitude	Disagreement	Disagreement
Belongingness	Disagreement	Neutral
Idealism	Disagreement	Neutral
Personal Control	Disagreement	Agreement
Optimism	Disagreement	Neutral
Flexibility	Disagreement	Agreement

DISCUSSION

This study sought to compare motivational factors between gifted and non-gifted learners. Results of this study indicate that motivation does indeed differ between gifted and non-gifted learners. Results also indicate that there is significant difference between motivational factors of elementary and secondary gifted learners. This significant difference calls for further research into the variables causing this variation.

Close attention should be given to the identification of specific motivational factors demonstrated by gifted learners who experience success in school-like activities and those who are classified as under-

achievers. The strength of any such study lies in its practical application in the classroom. By better understanding the motivational factors of gifted learners teachers will be able to adapt both curriculum and instruction to meet their specific needs.

References

Allport, G. Becoming. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

Athey, I. "Reading Research in the Affective Domain," Harry Sincer and Robert B. Ruddell (eds.) Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading. Neward, Del: IRA, 1976, 352-373.

Barrett, H. O. "An Intensity Study of Thirty-two Gifted Children," Personnel Guidance., 1957, 36, 192-194.

Carter, P., Jr. "A Descriptive Analysis of the Adult Adjustment of Persons Once Identified as Disabled Readers," an unpublished dissertation, Indiana University, 1964.

Combs, A. W. and D. Snygg. Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.

Frymier, J. R. "Development and Validation of a Motivation Index," Theory into Practice. 1970, 9, 56-88.

Gowan, J. C. "The Underachieving Gifted Child: A Problem for Everyone," Exceptional Child., 1955, 21, 247-249.

_____ "Dynamics of the Underachievement of Gifted Students," Exceptional Child., 1957, 24, 98-101.

_____ "Factors of Achievement in High School and College," Journal of Counseling Psychology., 1960, 8, 91-96.

Maslow, A. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.

Ryan, G.T. "The Influence of Readability of Text, Motivation, and Intellignece on Critical Reading Comprehension of Secondary Social Studies Students," an unpublished dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1978.

Ryan, G.T. and Ann A. Templeton "An Comparison Between the Motivational Attributes of Gifted and Non-Gifted Learners," a paper presented at the annual meeting of The Southwest Educational Research Association, 1980.